



I AM THE SUN

A LAKOTA CHANT

by
Maurice Kenny

A Song
Of Praise
Defiance
And Determination



Sharol
and
Barbara

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I did not know then how much was ended.
When I look down from this high hill of old age,
I can see the butchered women and children
lying heaped and scattered along the crooked
gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes
still young. And I can see that something else
died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in
the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It
was a beautiful dream . . . the nation's hoop is
broken and scattered. There is no center any
longer, and the sacred tree is dead."

. . . Black Elk

Father, I come;
Mother, I come;
Brother, I come;
Father, give us the arrows.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

Father, I hold one for Big Foot;
Mother, I hold one for Black Coyote;
Brother, I hold one for Yellow Bird;
Father, give us back our arrows.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

Father, give us sky;
Father, give us sun in the east
 night in the west;
Father, watch our shadows;
Father, give us back our arrows.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

Mother, your breast is bare;
Mother, your breast is not enough to sustain us;
Mother, hold our bones;
Mother, we search for our arrows.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

Brother, we cried for you;
Brother, we descended with you,
 and your flesh
 and your bones
 and your fur which kept us warm;
Brother, when our arrows are returned
 we will seek you.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

Arrows, now the skies are diseased;
Arrows, now the earth is diseased;
Arrows, now the people are sick on dreams;
Arrows, come back to us.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

Our father is gone;
 our father has fled;
 our father has turned his face;
Arrows, give us back our father.

Our mother has closed her eyes;
 our mother has closed her mouth;
 our mother has closed her heart;
Arrows, give us back our mother.

Our brother has wandered away;
 our brother will not walk;
 our brother has gone down;
Arrows, give us back our brother.

The arrows broke at Greasy Grass;
The arrows broke with Crazy Horse;
The arrows broke with Sitting Bull;
Father, give us back our arrows.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

In the river of his blood
I stand in Big Foot's grave;
In the shout of fear
I shout for Black Coyote;
In the dance of his dream
I dance for Yellow Bird;
Father, give us
give us,
Father, give us our arrows.

We will put the center back
in your country;
We will circle stones and make the hoop
in your country;
We will plant the seed of the sacred tree
in your country.

We will fill the river with water;
We will fill the woods with trees;
We will clothe the bones with flesh;
We will empty the graves;
We will call back the wolf, the deer;
We will build the walls of the dream;
We will make and tend the fire
in your country.

For I am the sun!
I am the sun!
I stand above the world.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!
Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

Father, give us back our arrows,
and make a woman into a child,
a boy into a man,
a girl into a woman,
an arrow into a country,
a country into a home,
a home into the sun.

Chankpe Opi Wakpala!
Chankpe Opi Wakpala!
Chankpe Opi Wakpala!

Father, give us no more graves;
Father, give us back our arrows!
We have learned to hold them sacred!

This chant is based upon a Lakota Ghost Dance Song.
Chankpe Opi Wakpala is Lakota-Sioux for Wounded Knee.

Author of:

Poems:

THE HOPELESS KILL
DEAD LETTERS SENT
WITH LOVE TO LESBIA
AND GRIEVE, LESBIA
I AM THE SUN
NORTH: POEMS OF HOME
(In Preparation)
DANCING BACK STRONG THE NATION
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Plays:

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